

Pharmacy NewsCapsule

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Who am I?

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For those of you that I have met, Hello Again! To those who I have not met, I look forward to meeting you in person, but let me take some time here to introduce myself. I am the new Consultant Pharmacist. I am sure all of you knew Rick Shannon in the past, it's his shoes that I am trying to fill.

Just so you can get to know me a little, my background includes stints in poison control/drug information, retail pharmacy, and hospital pharmacy which included surgery, intensive care, emergency medicine, transplant, general medicine and geriatrics clinic. Most recently, I have been involved in managed care working for an insurance company. On the personal side, I am married and have two young children that keep me busy.

I am extremely excited to be here and look forward to meeting and working with each and every one of you!

What is the Pharmacy NewsCapsule?

Doug Englebert
Pharmacy Practice Consultant PRQI

The NewsCapsule is intended to be a forum where information on new medications, survey issues related to pharmacy and other pertinent information is shared between those of us who read it. I will welcome information any of you wish to publish or any suggestions on topics you would like to see covered. The intent is that all types of surveyors can use this publication so you will see articles that may not pertain to you. The goal is that the information will help us all do our jobs better.

Recall Alert

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Two highly used medications have recently been recalled or limited in their distribution. The products are Rezulin®(troglitazone) and Propulsid®(cisapride).

Cisapride is a medication that is used for acid reflux or heartburn that is unresponsive to other medications. Due to 80 deaths and over 300 reported cases of heart rhythm abnormalities the manufacturer will no longer market the product as of July 14th. Those of you who survey should see providers addressing this by changing medications for their patients or residents.

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*****References are available upon request*****

New Drugs January 1-March 30 2000

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Brand Name	Generic Name	Use
Lotronex	Alosetron	Oral medication for treatment of irritable bowel disease in women
Trileptal	Oxycarbazepine	Oral medication for treatment of partial seizures.
Protonix	Pantoprazole	Oral tablet for treatment of erosive esophagitis.

Those of you who use the Top Drugs in Wisconsin Nursing Homes List, it is being updated and you will see some of the drugs highlighted here in that list.

Med Error Corner

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This section will be an ongoing section that will look at med errors and the proposals that various organizations are suggesting to decrease the amount of errors in our health systems. This month will be a general issue in regards to med errors.

What is in a name? Well, when it comes to medications, plenty. Over the years, manufacturers have come up with all sorts of great marketing names for their medications. Unfortunately many of

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News We All Can Use

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How many of us have heard of the 'date rape drug', Ecstasy or methamphetamine? Well now there have been reports of individuals taking high doses of dextromethorphan. You know the DM part of Robitussin DM.

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Focus Drug of the Month

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Since this newsletter will attempt to come out every other month you will actually see two medications presented in this section.

Exelon® (rivastigmine)

This is a new medication just approved for the treatment of Alzheimer's. This is the third medication in a series where the other two are Cognex® and Aricept®.

All three of these medications work based on the fact that those individuals with Alzheimer's have a acetylcholine deficiency. Acetylcholine is a neurotransmitter in our brain that helps with memory and cognition. These medications therefore work on blocking the breakdown of the acetylcholine the individual still has available. The effect expected is a decrease in the speed of disease advancements. However, these medications have not been shown to alter the course of the dementing process.

Exelon should be given with food. Those individuals who have gastric acid reflux, history of ulcers or who are on anti-inflammatory medications should be monitored for ulcers as Exelon will increase gastric acid secretions.

Exelon has been associated with a high incidence of nausea and vomiting and subsequently weight loss. Caregivers should be aware of this fact and have plans in place to deal with these adverse effects.

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them sound alike and look alike when they are written on a prescription pad.

Some examples include the following:

In many cases, the errors do not have significant outcomes. However, with the number of prescriptions continuing to rise at breakneck speeds, the number of fatal errors has reached a critical level. Recently, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a report on medical errors. That report indicated that over 7000 people die from medication errors per year. That report also indicated that the error rate has increased 8.48 times from 1983-1993.

Say these five times fast or quickly write them down on a prescription pad.

Zyvox and Vioxx
Zyvox and Luvox
Celebrex and Cerebyx
Celebrex and Celexa
Covera and Provera
Tobrex and Tobradex
Lodine and Iodine
Monopril and minoxidil

Agencies are taking action. The FDA has developed some action items to influence the brand name of a drug before it can be approved. Another organization, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP), is involved with some manufacturers in testing medication names before a medication is even submitted for approval.

These efforts can help with many errors because computer programs can check databases, etc., to look at sound-alike and look-alike medication names. Yet you still have an unpredictable factor and that is practitioner handwriting. To address this fact many organizations have called to eliminate handwritten prescriptions. It's a formidable task since today 95% of prescriptions are handwritten. However, due to better technological tools we may get there eventually.

Those of you who survey may run across these errors. Reminding providers that they should report these errors is critical.

Mobic® (meloxicam)

This is a new medication that is approved for the signs and symptoms of osteoarthritis. This medication is actually classified with medications such as ibuprofen and naproxen or commonly referred to as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). However, Mobic is thought to have greater specificity for affecting the inflammation of osteoarthritis and decreased effect on the enzyme of the GI tract. This should lead to less GI side effects.

This medication is actually trying to compete with Vioxx® and Celebrex®. Vioxx and Celebrex are in a different classification due to their increased selectivity and proposed significant decrease in GI toxicity seen with NSAIDs. Therefore Mobic actually will be priced lower than Vioxx and Celebrex.

Mobic can be taken without regard to meals. Those individuals who have renal failure must have their dose adjusted. Typically Mobic is given as 7.5 mg tablet once a day. The maximum dose is 15 mg. Surveyors in long-term care should see most elderly residents on a dose of 7.5 mg.

Adverse effects with Mobic are GI related. Commonly you will see diarrhea, nausea and heartburn. Monitoring for signs and symptoms of GI bleeding should be implemented.

If there are medications you would like to have more information on to be presented here please send an email to Doug at engleda@dhfs.state.wi.us

Did you know?

The top ten medications by dollar amount in US Nursing Homes as of 12/31/97 were as follows:
1. Risperdal, 2. Zoloft, 3. Prilosec, 4. Zyprexa, 5. Ranitidine, 6. Pepcid, 7. Propulsid, 8. Paxil, 9. Prozac, 10. Aricept

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Troglitazone is a medication that is used for type II diabetes mellitus. It has been associated with liver toxicity that has led to deaths and liver transplants. Since two new medications, Actos® (pioglitazone) and Avandia® (rosiglitazone) offer the same benefits of Rezulin® it was determined in March of 2000 to pull the medication from the market.

Those who survey should have already seen patients and residents switched to either Actos or Avandia. At this time there have not been any reports of liver toxicity with these two products, however patients and residents will need to have liver function tests every two months for the first year and then periodically.

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High doses of dextromethorphan can have a psychotropic effect. Individuals can have a feeling of intoxication and have hallucinations. These high doses can lead to brain damage, panic attacks and bromide toxicity (bromide is usually the salt form of dextromethorphan). Also, since many products that contain dextromethorphan have additional ingredients like acetaminophen and pseudoephedrine, there is a concern for serious overdoses of these medications. Remember you can buy Robitussin anywhere.

Consultant's Corner

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This section is basically a miscellaneous section that will show up each issue and will contain tidbits of information much of which will come directly from your questions. If there is anything you ever want more detailed information on please drop me an email me at engleda@dhfs.state.wi.us and I'll see what I can find.

- It's summer time so please remember that those individuals on psychotropic medications have an increased risk of heat stroke. Clozapine is a big offender. Keep those residents and patients cool and hydrated.
- There is evidence that high cholesterol may increase the risk of Alzheimer's. Studies have shown that individuals with high cholesterol have a higher risk of Alzheimer's where as those taking medications, like Zocor, had a lower incidence. The theory is that cholesterol is involved in providing an enzyme that generates neuronal plaques. However, its too early to tell yet if these products should be routinely used to prevent Alzheimer's.
- Those individuals who are on Aricept for Alzheimer's should be aware that if they are also on Paxil for depression there have been reports of an interaction that causes increased blood levels of Aricept. This leads to more side effects of Aricept like insomnia, severe confusion and severe diarrhea. Caregivers should be aware of this interaction.
- Phenytoin suspension has been known to have decreased absorption when given with tube feedings. Tube feedings should be stopped when phenytoin is given. When phenytoin will routinely be given with the same tube feeding formula, stable drug levels should be documented.

If anyone is interested I have copies of "Oral Dosage Forms That Should Not Be Crushed 2000 Update." Copies are limited. Contact Doug at engleda@dhfs.state.wi.us for a copy.